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ABSTRACT

A 1-year workplace literacy program was a joint effort of the Chamber of Commerce, public schools, and seven hotels in Arlington, Virginia. Participants were employees with limited English proficiency. The project resulted in the production of a manual, a video, curricula for housekeeping and food and beverage workers, curricula for more advanced hotel employees, and a set of six interactive audio computer-assisted lessons. A total of 230 employees enrolled in 26 classes. Eighty-six percent of those who completed the classes demonstrated improvement in communication skills as indicated by supervisors. (CML)

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ADULT AND CAREER EDUCATION
ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ARLINGTON EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

FINAL PERFORMANCE

REEP/HOTEL WORKPLACE LITERACY PROJECT

OCTOBER 1, 1988 - MARCH 31, 1990
GRANT # V198A80135

SUBMITTED JUNE,1990

ARLINGTON EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (REEP)
ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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CE 055 169

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Abstract

The primary goal of the Federal Workplace Project of 1988 - 1989 was to implement a three front attack on the problems of illiteracy in the workplace in Arlington County.

The plan united three sectors of the Arlington's Community: the Chamber of Commerce, The Arlington Education and Employment Program of the Arlington Public Schools, and the Hospitality industry, represented by seven hotels. The workplace literacy problem that this grant focused on was the communication needs of the limited English speaking employees of the participating hotels. This problem was identified through a survey conducted in 1988 to determine the workplace literacy needs of this industry.

The campaign was waged on three fronts: at the work-sites through customized ESL (English as a Second Language) classes; at the Adult Learning Center at Wilson School; and through the Advisory Committee comprised of all the partners.

The success of the project can be measured by the following indicators:

* A total of 230 individual employees enrolled in 26 classes.
    * partner hotels = 194; sites = 36
* A total of 298 ESL slots were provided through these classes.
* 86% of those who completed the classes demonstrated improvement in communication skills as indicated by supervisors.
* Attendance among Partner classes averaged 83%.
* Retention among Partner classes was 87%.
* Eighty-nine employees attended the Learning Center. Fifteen accumulated 60 or more hours.
* The manual, Perspectives in Organizing a Workplace Literacy Program was published and the video, Laboring for Literacy was produced.
* Workplace curricula for Housekeeping and Food and Beverage were developed and implemented.
* A curriculum for more advanced hotel employees was developed for the learning center.

* A set of six interactive audio computer assisted lesson was developed.
* All the partners of the first grant made a commitment to sustain the partnership for a second year.

* The Adult Learning Center was designed and put into operation to provide maximum flexibility for continued study of ESL.

PARTS I and II: COMPARISON OF OBJECTIVES, ACTUAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS/SLIPPAGES/CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

OBJECTIVE 1: To develop/revise instructional materials for workplace literacy training of functionally illiterate LEP employees working in the hotel industry in Arlington (Virginia) County.

1. OUTCOMES

This objective was fully accomplished. Curricula for Housekeeping and Food and Beverage Departments are complete. A curriculum for more advanced hotel employees was created for use in the learning center. A handbook entitled Perspectives in Organizing A Workplace Literacy Program was also developed. A manual entitled Employee Recruitment for ESL Classes was completed. All are being sent to THE VIRGINIA ABE LITERACY RESOURCE CENTER for state dissemination and to THE CURRICULUM COORDINATING CENTER and THE ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE FOR ADULT, CAREER AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION for national dissemination.

2. ACTIVITIES

The purpose of this activity was to assess the literacy and basic skills needs of the employees in the hotel industry in Arlington. The Project began in the Fall of 1988 by convening an advisory committee composed of representatives of the seven partner hotels, two representatives of the Schools, and REEP's workplace staff. The program design was presented and an action plan was developed, with a schedule for site visits to each hotel and a literacy audit of a sampling of sites. (Appendix)

The literacy audit required collection of data and analysis of the following:

* samples of written materials and forms
* observation of jobs
* recordings of dialogues and conversations
* interviews with supervisors
* interviews with trainees

This information was analyzed and job competencies were identified along with language function lists. These lists were given to supervisors and other relevant hotel staff for their in-

put on what items were very important, important, or not important.

Hotel staff and employees determined that English was needed in order to:

* interact better with the guests
* understand directions from their supervisors
* avoid costly mistakes when carrying out what they think they should be doing
* ask questions for clarification
* notify supervisors about an emergency at home or at work
* speak with management without needing interpreters

The information collected in the literacy audit produced the foundation on which the Housekeeping and Food and Beverage department curricula were built. A pool of twelve units for Housekeeping and thirteen units for Food and Beverage was developed. Six to eight units can be covered in a typical 60-hour course. The REEP workplace curricula have a special customizing feature. The classroom instructor works with hotel supervisors to set course content by selecting from the pool of units for each curricula. Six to eight units may be selected by the supervisor that address the priorities of their particular hotel.

In addition to developing our own workplace curricula, staff then began to review commercially available materials at The Center for Applied Linguistics and at the BESCE Center. These materials were annotated and correlated to the curricula as resources. A file of teacher-made materials has also been established.

Additional materials have been developed for the Learning Center related to hospitality workplace tasks. (Appendix) Titles that are underlined are directly relevant to workplace entry-level tasks while those under vocabulary, reading, writing, and grammar are appropriate for job up-grading.

A handbook entitled Perspectives in Organizing Workplace Literacy Programs was written and has been distributed widely. Presentations have also been made. The manual is a "how to" guide on planning organizing and implementing workplace programs. It offers the reader two perspectives for initiating the effort: the educator's perspective and the business perspective.

A manual to assist hotels in marketing workplace literacy to their employees was also produced.

3. SCHEDULE OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS/SLIPPAGE/CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

All activities were conducted according to plan.

OBJECTIVE 2: To develop computer-assisted and other self-instructional modules to improve workplace literacy to be used in the learning center at Wilson School

1. OUTCOMES

The Comprehensive Competencies Program (CCP) from U.S. Basics was selected for use in the learning center. It was selected because it provides a framework for delivering self-accessing basic and life skills ESL instruction. It also provides an authoring system which instructors were able to use to develop their own computer-assisted lessons. A set of six pronunciation lessons geared to hotel employees was created with the use of the CCP authoring system. Apple II E computers and other software were purchased to supplement the CCP materials.

2. ACTIVITIES

Once the classroom curriculum for Housekeeping and Food and Beverage were developed and materials for classroom use were reviewed and identified, efforts were concentrated on identifying multi-media instructional materials that would enhance classroom instruction and/or fulfill the needs of the hotel employees who did not fit into one of the classes but were still in need of remediation.

The Project was able to benefit from the CCP (Comprehensive Competencies Program) system from U.S. Basics system which was acquired through a learning partnership from the UPS Foundation to U.S. Basics. The CCP program provided us with multi- media lifeskills ESL instructional materials. The CCP print, audiovisual, and computer lessons are all self-accessing to a certain extent. Linkages were easily made between our workplace curricula, materials and procedures. The BEST test, used as a placement test for the hotel classes, could also be used for placement into CCP general ESL instruction. CCP lessons were correlated to the hotel classroom curriculum through the development of Language Master lessons which provide hotel-specific vocabulary instruction. With these correlations and linkages, hotel employees coming to the Learning Center were able to access the CCP materials that were already in place and see the connection with their on-site classes.

The CCP program also provided us with an authoring system which instructors could use to develop their own computer-assisted lessons. This saved the grant time and money that had been planned for using a computer programmer to help us write our own computer assisted lessons.

Pronunciation was identified by the hotels as a need to be addressed. Two sets of six pronunciation lessons geared to hotel employees was created with the use of the CCP authoring system. Once the lessons were outlined, it took seven hours to put a single lesson (requiring 20-30 minutes of student time) onto the computer and to record it on the interactive-audio. Several more hours were spent editing. Problems arose when the system did not apportion audio space correctly. Students now are able to access this lesson without trouble. However, because of these problems with the authoring system, it was decided to postpone further recording until U.S. Basics provides us with their new, up-dated system.

Other computer software was purchased to supplement the CPP materials (Appendix). Apple II E's were purchased and particular thought was given to software that provided teacher tools which enable the instructor to customize lessons. For example, a unit on reporting room repairs was created using the Word Attack program.

3. SCHEDULE OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS/SLIPPAGE/CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

This activity took longer than anticipated due to our need to learn more about computer assisted instruction, research the various systems that were already available and determine what the most cost effective and time efficient course of action would be. Instead of purchasing only 5 Apple IIGS computers, we were able to purchase 2 IBM compatible, 3 Apple IIe's, 1 Macintosh SE and one CCP audio enhancement unit, plus various peripherals. We were able to save money on the programmer by using the lesson authoring system available to us with CCP which we acquired in a different grant.

OBJECTIVE 3: <u>To recruit functionally illiterate LEP persons employed in the hotel industry in Arlington County.</u>

1. OUTCOMES

448 employees were pre-tested and enrolled in various components of the program. 230 individuals were served in 298 workplace class slots. Over 80 hotel employees have enrolled in the Learning Center; 22 have studied 30 or more hours and 15 have studied 60 or more hours.

2. ACTIVITIES

Our goals were to recruit 280 employees to attend the 60-hour classes, 40 to enroll in special short-term classes, and 80 to attend the Learning Center for 60 hours. In order to do this, we had to have the cooperation of each property. Recruiting trainees for the 60-hour workplace classes was greatly facilitated by the enthusiastic cooperation of the management of the hotels. A "top-down " recruitment campaign was launched by general managers who made it clear that the program and services

would be a top priority for their hotel. Supervisors were also included during the early phase of the planning process, and their needs, concerns, and suggestions for scheduling and recruitment were taken into account. Since they were involved in this way, the supervisors helped a great deal with recruitment by advertising the program and identifying employees who would most benefit from it.

We were also able to disseminate written information about the classes and promote the learning center without difficulty. At departmental meetings there were displays of posters showing students at work at the Learning Center, informational fliers were distributed as well. Recruitment for the Learning Center was done through class visits which included orientation tours of the Center. All hotels even arranged transportation to the learning center tours. Many general managers accompanied their employees on those tours. The hotel staff also helped promote the program by providing incentives of cash bonuses and/or paid release time. Most also had elaborate recognition ceremonies to mark the end of each course.

3. SCHEDULE OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS/SLIPPAGE/CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

Recruitment for the special classes never got beyond discussion with the management of the hotels. Staff energies were focused on the 60-hour classes with a curriculum including the major topics wanted by management. Other issues were not considered important enough to warrant the disruption to the work schedule or the expense.

We did encounter some difficulties while recruiting trainees for the classes. There was sometimes confusion about whether employees were to come to class during their regular work hours or on their own time. To provide tips on how to avoid such problems for others considering this kind of program, we compiled a recruitment guide (similar to the booklet published by Triton College, Illinois).

OBJECTIVE 4: To screen potential trainees to identify their eligibility, functional literacy levels, and likelihood of completing the training.

1. OUTCOMES

Screening for workplace classes included a pre-test (the Basic English Skills Test - BEST), writing and math samples, and an interview along with an application.

2. ACTIVITIES

Before being able to determine the trainees' literacy levels, it was necessary to define functional literacy. The definition we chose to work with was the Adult Performance Level (APL) Functional Competency Model developed at the University of Texas. And so, for this project functional literacy is defined as **"the ability to apply a set of skills to a set of general knowledge areas which are related to success in adult life."**

It proved difficult to find an appropriate tool to assess people with limited education and limited literacy skills (within the context of the workplace). At the start of the project we used the Bilingual Vocational Proficiency Test (BVOPT) as our pre-test. This was later replaced by the Basic English Skills Test (BEST) as the BVOPT was designed for people at a higher proficiency level than our prospective trainees. The BEST was chosen as it was more appropriate for the language levels and educational backgrounds of the hotel employees. Although it is not focused on the workplace, it does show progress in general language proficiency as opposed to content achievement.

The math tests and writing samples were used to create a more complete profile of the trainees. These skills were not considered priorities for the workplace classes as management had determined that working on speaking and listening skills was a more immediate need for their employees.

Interviews provided the opportunity for students and staff to get to know each other. During this activity, the prospective trainees also had an opportunity to learn more about the program and about other educational resources available to them if they were ineligible for workplace classes.

3. SCHEDULE OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS/SLIPPAGE/CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

All activities were conducted according to plan.

OBJECTIVE 5: To select 400 functionally illiterate LEP employees (from participating hotels) who are likely to benefit from and complete the training.

1. OUTCOMES

448 employees were pre-tested and enrolled in various components of the program. A total of 298 training slots were made available during five cycles of instruction. 262 of those slots were filled by employees of the original seven partner hotels. 36 others were served at three additional sites. 89 trainees from the partner hotels used the learning center. An additional seven from the "sites" also used the center.

2. ACTIVITIES

Selection was done by the hotel management along with the project coordinator. While the goal was to select 15 employees for each class, we generally had fewer students in the classes. There were two reasons for smaller class sizes:

* reluctance on the part of management to take too many employees off the line at once
* need to compose classes as homogeneously as possible.

There was a wide range of educational backgrounds, literacy skills, and basic English language skills among the employees selected to participate in the workplace classes. Although homogeneous classes were difficult to achieve, every effort was made to limit the multi-level nature of the classes. This sometimes resulted in a class of only 10 or 12 trainees. Classes generally varied from 8 to 14 students.

3. SCHEDULE OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS/SLIPPAGE/CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

The project requested a modification from the goal of 280 students to 280 ESL slots. This request was not related to recruitment but to the fact that the hotel management preferred to have some employees continue on with English, beyond the stage of introduction to more confident use of the language. All in all 298 slots were provided.

It was originally anticipated that 80 hotel employees would use the learning center for a minimum of 60 hours each. In fact, 89 trainees have used the center, with 14 completing 60 hours. We believe more students would have completed more hours; however, it was not totally possible because of the late start the learning center had. We also believe that the difficult work schedules most participants have also impedes participation. The center is most widely used by employees from the closest hotel.

OBJECTIVE 6,7,8,9: <u>To provide job related ESL, math instruction, consumer awareness and problem-solving and citizenship training to all trainees.</u>

1. OUTCOMES

Twenty-six classes were held enrolling 230 employees in 298 slots. The attendance rate was 83% and the retention rate was 87%.

2. ACTIVITIES

The program provided each trainee with job-related ESL and literacy instruction. In most cases the major focus of the on site classes was on job related ESL with a smaller emphasis on basic skills instruction such as math. This was because the employees that the hotels identified for the training were at proficiency levels far below anyone's expectation. Numeracy, however, was an important component of the training. Work materials and tasks were used to develop lessons on numeracy. Problem-solving was addressed through the various ESL techniques that the teachers used, such as the problem solving technique and the cooperative learning approach. Citizenship instruction was provided for trainees who were newly legalized aliens and had a need to learn English, history and government in order to become permanent residents of the U.S.

Job-related ESL and workplace literacy instruction was provided in on-site classroom instruction and through the learning center. The original plan for scheduling was to cluster hotel employees in order to have separate classes for different departments and to have 3 levels of classes: beginning, intermediate, and advanced. The plan also seemed convenient since three hotels said that they had absolutely no space for a class. In fact, two hotels shared a class to accommodate two others with no space. All the participating hotels later decided that they preferred to have their own classes on site, no matter how restricted the available space was, to be sure that their own hospitality style and hotel culture were taught and to save travel time.

3. SCHEDULE OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS/SLIPPAGE/CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

Providing instruction to the Food and Beverage departments proved to be more problematic than for the Housekeeping department. It is a very difficult department to schedule classes for because if the employees are not serving, they are setting up or "breaking down", cleaning up.

Three types of schedules were tried:

a. Between shifts, but on paid release, 2:00-4:00 and 3:30-5:30.
b. After breakfast and before lunch, 10:00-11:00, four days/week. Bonus incentive at this site.
c. At the end of the early breakfast shift, at noon, on paid release.

OBJECTIVE 10: To provide follow-up counseling/assistance to trainees after they have completed training.

1. OUTCOMES

The status of former employees has been assessed at least twice during the course of the program. 83% are still in jobs. Very little counseling has taken place however, except in the learning center. This is because providing services on the workplace requires that employees are returned to their jobs as soon as their class is completed.

2. ACTIVITIES

At the end of the pre-test, REEP staff do an intake and gather information about the participants prior educational background and learning goals. At that point they are counseled about our workplace classes, intensive ESL classes and the learning center. In addition, they are given a reference sheet with relevant information regarding education and training opportunities. Employees who will not participate in the on-site classes are encouraged to visit our center and to contact us for further assistance. Participants in the workplace classes are given an orientation to the goals of our workplace literacy program and are brought on tour to our facility to determine if further instruction through the learning center or through the intensive ESL classes is appropriate.

3. SCHEDULE OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS/SLIPPAGE/CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

We would like to have accomplished more counseling, but we did not have access to the employees after our classes ended.

OBJECTIVE 11: To make recommendations to hotel/motel managers concerning reading levels

1. OUTCOMES

A manual entitled Employee Recruitment for ESL Classes was compiled. The purpose of this document was to provide hotel staff with a script, memos and fliers that were written on a low enough level for employees to understand about the workplace programs being offered.

2. ACTIVITIES

REEP staff met with hotel supervisors, collected workplace materials that employees were required to read or write, and developed workplace material and curricula. In several cases it was pointed out that materials were on reading levels that were higher than the employees could handle. It was recommended that they be written at a lower level or introduced to the employees in oral presentations by bi-lingual employees. The project did not rewrite any hotel materials but did provide tips on writing for lower reading levels.

3. SCHEDULE OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS/SLIPPAGE/CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

No materials were specifically rewritten for the hotels.

OBJECTIVE 12: To recommend to the Chamber of Commerce other workplace programs

1. OUTCOMES

The project has successfully extended the partnership model to include 4 additional Arlington hotels and expanded to a parallel model in Alexandria with representation from the Alexandria Schools, Chamber and 3 hotels.

2. ACTIVITIES

This project was actively involved in promoting workplace literacy. Three additional Arlington Chamber of Commerce businesses or hotels were served as "sites". The project and its objectives were promoted by the Chamber to its membership and four additional Arlington hotels signed on to the new partnership.

3. SCHEDULE OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS/SLIPPAGE/CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

All activities were conducted according to plan.

PART III: THE NUMBER AND CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS WHO COMPLETED PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND THOSE WHO DID NOT

A. THE NUMBER AND CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS WHO COMPLETED PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND THOSE WHO DID NOT

Table 1 below summarizes general characteristics of employees participating in the workplace project.

	Completers n = 199	**Non-Completers** n = 31
Ethnic Background		
a) Hispanic	82	87
b) Asian	15	13
c) other	3	0
Age		
a) < 30 years	38	55
b) 30-39 years	39	35
Education*		
a) 6 or less	48	53
b) completed H.S.	29	47
Department		
a) housekeeping	82	71
b) food & beverage	14	23
c) maintenance	2	0
d) other	2	6

Table 1: Characteristics of project trainees (%) N = 230.
*Data incomplete; n = 180 for Completers, n = 19 for Non-Completers.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, PLEASE REFER TO PROJECT EVALUATION.

B. OUTCOMES ACHIEVED BY PARTICIPANTS WHO COMPLETED PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The planned outcomes for the project were:

1. Trainees become functionally literate, particulary in terms of materials and tasks related to their jobs.
2. Trainees can read and write in English materials related to their jobs.
3. Trainees can better understand and do their jobs.

An explanation and evaluative comment for each outcome is given below. Detailed supporting data is given in the evaluation report.

The main goal of the training was to provide job-related ESL instruction to the LEP employees selected from the participating hotels; therefore, the emphasis of instruction was on oral language skills related to improving job performance. In general, gains in proficiency by trainees were modest; however, phenomenal progress was possible for some because they had extremely low scores on the pretest. Gains were modest because of the limited number of instructional hours.

Generally, the reading and writing requirements of the hotel employees enrolled in the workplace literacy project are minimal. Both skills are related to understanding instructions, as well as reporting problems and ordering supplies. Trainees had extremely limited knowledge of spoken English, and their writing skills were also limited.

Overall, supervisors were satisfied with employee progress. Supervisors noted improvements for about three-fourths of the employees, especially in their initiative at work and understanding English. However, while praising the program, some supervisors noted that employees still needed substantial improvement in English skills.

FOR SPECIFIC INFORMATION, PLEASE REFER TO THE PROJECT EVALUATION.

PART IV: DISSEMINATION ACTIVITIES

Project staff showcased this workplace literacy project through the following activities:

* Numerous news articles
* Channel 7 (ABC) news story, February, 1989
* Cable tv mini-documentary "Laboring For Love." This was prepared during this grant year and was shown on Arlington Cable TV in May, 1990.
* Presentations at conferences:
  National Alliance of Business Conference, Washington, D.C, October, 1989
  AAACE Conference, Atlantic City, N.Y. October, 1989
  National Workplace Literacy Conference, Rochester, N.Y. November, 1989
  National Conference on the Family Support Act, Fairfax, VA., November, 1989
  International Reading Association Conference, Washington, D.C., January, 1990
  Tesol Conference, San Francisco, CA., March, 1990
  MWAACE Conference, Baltimore, MD, April, 1990

* The following materials and curricula developed by this project will be sent to: the National Curriculum Coordination Center and to the ERIC Clearinghouse On Adult, Career and Vocational Education.

  * Housekeeping ESL: Workplace Literacy Curriculum For Hotels
  * Food and Beverage Trades ESL: Workplace Literacy Curriculum
  * Handbook: Perspectives On Organizing Workplace Literacy Programs
  * CAI pronunciation lessons
  * "Employee Recruitment Guide for workplace ESL classes"

PART V: EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

This project has been evaluated by an outside evaluator, Dr. Morris Peterson. The project was evaluated according to the original plan. Dr. Peterson conducted several start-up visits during the first several months of the project. He conducted an interim report and has submitted a comprehensive final evaluation of the project.

PART VI: CHANGES IN KEY PERSONNEL

No changes in key personnel occurred over the course of this grant. Several teachers however have been hired since there is great turnover in these positions. This turnover is largely due to the under employment of part-time teachers and the poor schedules that we have to offer, such as early morning or late afternoon classes.